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1	BRS	L1	1	(steve and fong).in.	USPA	2001/04/27 11:02
2	IS&R	L2	6	("482527") or ("4960727") or ("6028789") or ("8064595") or ("821570")	USPA	2001/04/27 11:14
3	BRS	L4	4	(zhao and randy).in.	USPA	2001/04/27 11:07

providing party is made by means of a name or a short code. Once selected, the selected party is checked in an automatic authorization procedure to verify that the user has selected a party recognized by the system, as shown at logical block 220. If the result is negative, an error message is displayed and system flow returns processing back to logical block 220. If the result is affirmative, processing flow proceeds to the logical block 224, as shown. At the logical block 224, a test is performed to determine whether the selected party is actively available and, if not, an error message and a prompt for reentry is generated and transmitted to the user, as indicated at functional block 226.

If the result at the logical block 224 is affirmative, a test is performed to determine whether the selected party is one who accepts contacts from any callers, or only selected callers, as shown at logical block 228. If the result at block 228 is that the selected party only responds to authorized callers, the processing proceeds to logical block 230 which tests to determine if the caller is an authorized party. If the result at logical block 230 is negative, the system generates an error message and terminates the selected service session producing an exit from the SIGN-IN function, as shown at block 238. If, however, the result at logical block 230 is positive, meaning that the user is authorized to contact the selected party, then a billing code is assigned, as shown by functional block 234, to permit identifying and billing of charges for the system 50 services provided. After the billing code is established, the processing flow proceeds to functional block 236 where the user selects a desired function, and the type of connection required is established (utilizing an ESTABLISH CONNECTION function described in detail hereinafter with reference to FIG. 9). The SIGN-IN 35 routine is subsequently exited as shown at block 238.

An ESTABLISH CONNECTION function is illustrated in the flow chart of FIG. 9 which illustrates the processing methodology and structural flow for a specific embodiment of the ESTABLISH CONNECTION function as shown in FIG. 8. The ESTABLISH CONNECTION function begins at block 166 where the user selects a desired function to be performed by the previously selected party. Subsequently a logical operation 168 is performed to determine whether the 45 function is served locally or remotely, as shown. If the result at logical block 168 is negative, a logical operation 170 is performed to determine if a batch mode operation is to be performed. If the result at logic block 170 is negative, an interactive exchange made with a 50 remote computer is enabled, as indicated at functional block 172. If the result of logic operation 170 is positive, then a mode of operation that accumulates transaction records for batch transfer based on a desired standard at a later time is enabled, as indicated at functional block 55 174. In both cases, once the appropriate mode of operation is enabled, the ESTABLISH CONNECTION function is terminated and exited as shown by block 186.

If the result of the logic operation 168 is affirmative, a logical operation 176 is performed to determine whether the data base to be accessed is a local, full data base. If the result is negative, a logical operation 178 is performed to determine whether the data base is a local, partial data base. If the result of the logical operation 178 is negative, then an interactive transaction process is enabled for accessing a remote data base, as illustrated by functional block 180. If the result of the logic opera-

tion 178 is affirmative, then an interactive process is enabled, and transactions are accumulated to be periodically batch transmitted to the remote data base. In this mode, a partial data base is downloaded periodically to the central processor from the remote data base. If the result of the logic operation 176 is affirmative, then a completely interactive process is enabled, with immediate confirmation of transactions, as shown by functional block 184. In both block 182 and block 184, the mode of operation enacted is interactive, using only a local data base for validation and confirmation of a transaction. In both cases, the local data base immediately amended to reflect the processed transaction. However, in the mode enacted in block 184, where the entire data base is locally maintained, the amended data base is the primary source of information. In the mode enacted in block 182, where the local data base is a secondary partial image of a primary base managed elsewhere, the local data base is downloaded periodically from a remote site. The transactions that are processed locally are accumulated in addition in a separate transaction file and are then transferred periodically to the remote primary computer for updating. The ESTABLISH CONNECTION routine is terminated and exited after either block 184 or block 182, as illustrated by block 186.

Once the SIGN-IN function has been completed and exited, the user is then enabled to proceed with the selected service. However, having once entered a particular service function, the user is able to jump to other functions and override menus, thereby permitting an experienced user to move from any point within the routing tree to any other selected point without having to go through all menu options. Thus, a service selection SHORTCUT function may be activated at any time by a go-to command, formatted to optionally indicate at least the function, the party desired, and any necessary password. The go-to command initiates a service selection SHORTCUT function as illustrated by the flow diagram of FIG. 10. The service selection SHORTCUT function is entered as shown at block 240, and is activated as shown at logical block 242 via a logical operation which determines whether the go-to command (which may be a character such as ">") has been initiated. The go-to command may have a format, for example, as follows: "go-to, function name, selected party name or code, password, character string". If the result at logic operation 242 is negative, the SHORTCUT function is exited as illustrated by block 260.

If the go-to command is present, processing proceeds to logical block 244, where the logic operation determines whether the function indicated is recognizable by the system. If the result of the logic operation 244 is negative, an error message is generated and a prompt for re-entry is provided to the user as shown by functional block 246. If the result of the logic operation 244 is affirmative, the system performs a logical operation to determine whether the selected party exists and is recognized by the system, as illustrated at logical block 248. If the result of the logical operation 248 is negative, an error message is generated and a prompt for re-entry is provided to the user, as illustrated at functional block 250, after which processing flow returns to block 248, as shown. If the result at logical operation 248 is affirmative, the system determines whether a password is required as shown at logic block 252. If the result of the logical operation 252 is affirmative, a password is requested of the user and checked to determine if it is correct, as indicated at logical block 254. If the result of